

Already arrived in Brussels? Interest representation of Trade Unions from the new EU Member States at the EU level

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Already Arrived in Brussels? Interest Representation of Trade Unions from the New EU Member States at the EU Level

Documentation of Interview Results

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This working paper presents the interview results of the research project 'Already arrived in Brussels? Interest representation of trade unions from the new EU member states at the EU level'. The project has been carried out by the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen in collaboration with the Sociological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the Sociological Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and the Koszalin Institute of Comparative European Studies. Brigitte Krech was responsible for the conduct of interviews in Brussels. The project has received financial support from the Otto Brenner Foundation (Frankfurt/M.).

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Preface

Since the spring of 2007, the Research Centre for Eastern European Studies at the University of Bremen has been conducting the research project 'Already Arrived in Brussels? Representation of the Interests of Trade Unions of the New Member States at the EU Level'. In the project, the integration of trade unions from the new post-socialist member states Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia into EU governance is analysed. In the first phase of the project (May – December 2007) primarily the practical experiences of the trade union representatives were assessed.¹

With Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, three of the larger new member states were chosen for the empirical analysis that on the one hand have a large number of trade unions and on the other hand have differing trade union organisational structures. For each country national umbrella organisations and strong individual trade unions were chosen. In order to assure comparability, besides the national umbrella organisation for each country the trade unions responsible for the metal and those for the mining industry were selected. Thus, the trade union case studies comprise the strongest trade unions in the largest member states and therefore represent a best case scenario in respect to supposed potential to exert influence, i.e., the trade union case studies were consciously chosen not for being representative of the new EU member states, but as cases of maximum potential to exert influence. The basis for this is the working hypothesis of the weak representation of trade unions from the post-socialist member states at the EU level. If even the strongest trade unions do not make an appreciable appearance at the EU level, the hypothesis can be said to be proven.

In the summer of 2007 trade union representatives from the three new EU member states that were selected for the project were queried as to their experiences and to their opinion of their own role at the EU level. For this, leading trade union representatives responsible for the relations of the trade union in question with the EU were chosen. In order to obtain reliable evidence of the trade union's position, two representatives of each trade union (insofar as this was possible) were interviewed, to ensure that statements concerning the trade union's position were not distorted by personal preferences of an outsider. Additionally, members of the Social Dialogue of the EU (representatives of trade unions and employers), representatives of the EU institutions as well as experts on the role of trade unions at the EU level were interviewed. For the sake of comparison, trade unions from Germany, an old EU member state, were also included in the analysis.

The interviews comprise a questionnaire with a total of 43 questions, which were posed in personal conversations, as well as guided interviews. Within the context of the project more than 40 trade union representatives, more than 10 representatives of employers' unions and more

1 The project is conducted as a joint project by the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen, the Institute for Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and the Koszalin Institute of Comparative European Studies. Brigitte Krech was responsible for the interviews in Brussels. The project receives financial support from the Otto Brenner Foundation (Frankfurt am Main).

than 20 experts from politics and consultancy were interviewed from June to September 2007.² All of the interviewed trade union representatives are responsible in a leading position for relations to the EU level in their respective organisations (partly within a Department for International Relations) and are therefore especially competent as regards the subject of the interview. However, it can also be surmised that all of them have a higher opinion of the significance of the EU than other trade union representatives.

After a brief introduction to the analytical framework of the project, the questionnaire is reproduced with the answers of the trade union and employers' representatives from Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as the answers of the experts. The answers are listed in the order of topics of the questions.

If the questions differ in the way they are formulated, this is indicated by slashes (your trade union / your organisation / the trade unions from our country). If the questions are directed at employers' representatives or experts and relate to the trade unions, the answers are cited separately (e.g., question Q12a: Do you think that trade unions from our country fulfil the requirements for representativeness, accountability and transparency?).

In the fourth chapter, the answers to some of the main questions from the guided interviews are reproduced in extracts. As many respondents insisted on anonymity, the interviewees are designated by abbreviations that identify country (CZ: Czech Republic, PL: Poland, SK: Slovakia) and group (Gn: trade unionists of the new member states, An: employers of the new member states, Ex: experts). Within the main questions the answers are arranged to the greatest possible extent according to topic.

2 The questionnaire was designed by Heiko Pleines and then critically examined by the project partners, the members of the project advisory board and other experts. The final German version of the questionnaire was translated into the four other interview languages (English, Polish, Slovak and Czech); the translations were then reviewed and corrected by native speakers using back-translation.

Trade Unions from Post-Socialist Member States in EU Governance. An Analytical Framework

Introduction

The central question of the research project is whether trade unions from the post-Socialist member states are capable of adequate interest representation on the EU level. At issue is not only their formal integration into umbrella organisations and EU bodies; of much greater concern is their actual participation in political decision-making processes.

To this end, the focus of the research project is on the following guiding questions:

- To what extent and in which form are trade unions from the new member states integrated into political decision-making processes on the EU level?
- How do the participatory levels of trade unions from the new member states compare to those of trade unions from the old member states or other interest groups (in particular employers' associations) from the new member states?
- How does the trade unions' engagement on the EU level influence the national (and sub-national) level?

Three of the larger new member states, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, were chosen for the empirical analysis. The major trade unions from these three countries belong to the strongest among the post-socialist EU member states. Accordingly the analysis presents a best-case-scenario for the potential influence of trade unions from the post-socialist member state in EU governance. The trade union studies were thus consciously selected as cases of maximum influence potential rather than as representative of the new member states. This is due to the prevailing assumption of weak representation of trade unions from the new member states on the EU level. If even the strongest trade unions fail to gain traction on the EU level, then the assumption will have been validated. At the same time an analysis of the strongest trade unions offers the best possibilities for an analysis of effects of integration and Europeanisation.

The Competences of the EU

The competences of the EU in labour market regulation and social policy are limited in scope and largely focus on establishing health and safety regulations in the workplace, regulating labour migration within the EU and equalising the status of female labourers. Collective bargaining, one of the major tasks of trade unions, is still done exclusively below the EU level.

Nevertheless, the competences of the EU in the field of social policy have been systematically expanded since the beginning of the 1990s. And by means of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), a more sweeping EU-wide harmonisation of social integration, pension funds and health care has been pursued since 2000. Moreover, the EU competences in the economic sphere also possess implications for labour market regulation, as e.g. the EU Service Directive has shown.

Falkner (2006) furnishes a concise analysis of the expansion of EU social policy initiatives. Overviews of the policy field are provided by Edquist (2006), Falkner (2007) and Stuchlik (2008).

Trade Unions in EU Multilevel Governance

Economic concerns have traditionally shaped interest representation on the EU level, numerically as well as politically. To some extent, this phenomenon has arisen from the EU's history as an economic community. The Commission's dialogue with employers' and employees' representatives organised at the EU level (the Social Dialogue) is based on legal foundations. The Social Dialogue is rooted in Articles 138 and 139 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, which endow the Social Partners with legislative and executive competences. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the European Centre of Public Enterprises (CEEP) and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) are recognised as Social Partners by the European Commission and are involved in the Social Dialogue.

The current regulation of decision-making in the area of social policy on the EU level grants the Social Partners the right to initiate regulations within nine months if they express interest. If the Social Partners can reach a consensus within this period, they can request that it be incorporated into the Council of Ministers' decision via the Commission. Formally speaking, the EU institutions cannot take any actions in this policy field without consulting the Social Partners. It is only in the case that the Social Partners decline to negotiate that responsibility reverts back to the EU institutions.

However, labour relations continue to be strongly organised along national lines. Due to the different national concerns, consensus between the Social Partners is difficult to reach. In addition, national interest groups are often reluctant in their support for European umbrella organisations. This assertion is corroborated in Falkner (2000), Grande (2003), Greenwood (2003), Hartenberger (2001), Hyman (2005) and Rojot (2004). Busemeyer et al. (2006) provide an analysis of the positions of national trade unions with respect to the European economic and social policy.

Another institutionalised possibility for trade union participation in the EU decision-making process is via the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). Since its inception in the 1957 Treaty of Rome, the EESC's position has been steadily gathering strength. It unites representatives from employee associations, including those of civil servants (Group I), employees (Group II) and other sectors of organised civil society (Group III). The 317 members of the EESC are nominated by the national governments for a renewable four-year term of office.

In certain cases, the European Commission or the European Council is obliged to consult the EESC; in other instances, consultation is voluntarily. In addition, the EESC can also issue opinions unilaterally. The Single European Act (1986) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992) broadened the scope of issues that require EESC consultation, above all those concerning regional and environmental policy. Furthermore, the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) expanded the regulations for reporting to the EESC and also provides that the European Parliament can consult the EESC. However, the EESC is endowed solely with an advisory capacity. Obradovic/Vizcaino (2006) provide an overview on the inclusion of the EESC in the decision-making process on the EU level.

The Social Dialogue and trade union engagement on the EU level has already been thoroughly researched for the EU 15. Greenwood (2003, 149–174), Leiber/Falkner (2005) and Eising (2001) all provide a concise overview. Other important recent studies include Compston/Greenwood (2001), Edquist (2006), Erne (2006), Hartenberger (2000), Martin/Ross (2001) and Neal (2004). The impact of EU-level social policy initiatives on the member states has been

less intensively researched, however. Falkner et al (2005), Leiber/Falkner (2005) and Lopez-Santana (2006) provide first analyses on this topic.

Trade Unions in the Post-Socialist Member States

With the Eastern enlargement of the European Union, eight post-Socialist countries were incorporated in 2004,¹ and two more in 2007.² Due to their Socialist legacy, many trade unions in the new, post-Socialist EU member states indeed boasted large numbers of members, but are organisationally limited in their ability to represent trade union interests in the political arena. The trade unions are only associated in comparatively loose umbrella associations. Trade union representatives often shy away from political responsibility and have barely any experience in working with supranational committees.

The weakness of the post-Socialist trade unions is also manifest insofar as none of the national-level tri-partite committees has led to successful trade union participation in political decision-making processes in the new EU member states (see Casale (2000), Kurtan (1999), Mailand/Jesper (2004), Reutter (1996)). The trade unions' influence on national politics is generally perceived as minimal as the overviews by Ost (2006), Pleines (2003) and Sil/Candland (2001) show.³ On the basis of a comprehensive study, Stephen Crowley concludes that labour relations in the new EU member states tend to resemble the American model, and therefore might not be compatible with the EU's system (Crowley 2004). Vanhysse (2007) argues in a similar vein.

Many analyses of trade unions and labour relations in the post-socialist EU member states have been conducted to date. Kohl and Platzer (2004) present an overview of this topic. More important, however, are the numerous individual studies, which taken together provide a rather comprehensive body of knowledge. Examples pertaining to the countries covered in this publication (Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia) include Čambáliková (2001), Cox/Mason (2000), Deppe/Tatur (2002), Dvorakova (2003), Frege (2000), Gąsior-Niemiec (2007), Kubic (2004), Kroupa/Mansfeldová (2003), Mansfeldová (1999), Myant/Sloccock/Smith (2000), Myant/Smith (1999), Ost (2001 and 2005), Pańków/Gáciarz (2001) and Pollert (2001).

Trade Unions from the New Member States in EU Multilevel Governance

Interest representation on the EU level poses formidable challenges to the trade unions from the post-socialist countries. The quantitative representation of non-governmental organisations from the new member states is weak. While German, Belgian, French and Italian organisations are represented in 90% of the relevant umbrella organisations with respect to social policy, the new member states lie at the other end of the spectrum with only 40–50% representation, as an analysis by Wasner (2005) demonstrates.

For trade unions from the new member states the EESC constitutes a central channel of participation on the EU level. Organisations from the new member states received observer status in the EESC already in the mid-1990s. Since EU enlargement, Poland has 21 members in the

1 Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

2 Bulgaria and Romania.

3 Avdagic 2005 and Matthes/Terletzki 2005 provide a more differentiated perspective, citing numerous successful examples of political influence by trade unions. However, they do not challenge the widely held view that trade union interest representation is extremely weak in comparison to western Europe.

EESC, while the Czech Republic and Slovakia are represented by 12 and 9 members, respectively. Several trade unions from the new member states were already involved in EU-wide umbrella organisations prior to the accession and were thus included in the Social Dialogue. A further aspect of international engagement is the participation in European Work Councils in multi-national firms. A detailed study of their role in the countries under study here can be found by Tholen (2007).

However, up to now, no serious empirical studies have been conducted about the integration of the post-socialist trade unions in EU decision-making processes. The few existing academic analyses have largely been limited to a description of the general conditions and related problems, as the studies by Borragán (2003), Mansfeldová (2007) and Einbock (2007). A systematic, empirically-based survey of the experiences, modes of participation, successes and pitfalls of the new member state trade union representatives on the EU level is thus lacking.

Integration and Europeanisation

In the research project the role of trade unions from post-socialist member states in EU governance has been investigated from two angles. First, the actual (and not merely formal) inclusion of trade unions from the new member states in decision-making processes on the EU level is concerned. On the one hand, we will differentiate between the different methods of exerting influence and forums of decision-making. Meanwhile, the subjective self-evaluation of the trade union representatives with respect to their participation will be compared with the evaluation of other actors and objective criteria.

Political engagement on the EU level requires three abilities from interest groups, including trade unions. The first is the general ability to engage in political decision-making processes. The second is the ability to actively participate on the EU level, and the third is the fulfilment of the EU criteria that regulate access to the various consultation processes on the EU level.

From a chronological perspective, most interest groups first develop the basic ability to engage in political decision-making processes. In most cases, they commence their work on the national or regional level and develop a position that they wish to communicate to political decision-makers. Therefore, they have to know who the relevant decision-makers are and seek the appropriate way to communicate, that is, they must develop a thorough understanding of political processes. Strategies for easier access to political decision-makers include the procurement of expert knowledge, public protests and media attention. All of these strategies require resources, which range from technical expertise to active members and from financial resources to *savoir-faire* in public relations.

Engagement on the EU level requires additional personnel as well as new skills. The latter include basic skills like English language ability and knowledge about the decision-making structures in the EU, but also other more specialised abilities like networking on the multinational level. The difficulties inherent to the multilevel system are evident in the inability of nearly all interest groups to orchestrate protest actions on the EU level (in contrast to the national level). This means that engagement at the EU level cannot simply be understood as the logical extension of national political activities. Engagement at the EU level requires new capacities.

At least on paper, the European Commission has erected an additional barrier by introducing minimum qualifications for interest groups wishing to participate in EU decision-making processes based on the principles of transparency, accountability and representativeness. Trade

unions wishing to submit feedback to the Commission's draft regulations must therefore be prepared to furnish the Commission and the public at large with the necessary information.⁴

Based on the structure of trade union organisations, channels of influence and relevant institutions on the EU level, different categories can be established in order to evaluate how effective trade unions from the post-socialist member states have been able to integrate themselves into decision-making processes at the EU level. In terms of organisational structures, Greenwood differentiates (1) national organisations that exert influence on the EU level via national cooperation with their governments, (2) national organisations that have direct contact with EU organs, (3) transnational organisations and (4) international trade union umbrella organisations represented in Brussels.⁵ This differentiation is relatively general, and the division between (3) and (4) is not conclusive. It therefore makes more sense to categorise according to channels of influence or forums of decision-making.

In principle, there are six ways for trade unions to exert influence on political decision-making processes at the EU level: (1) direct consultations with the European Commission, (2) consultations with national representatives in the Council of Ministers, (3) direct consultations with the European Parliament, (4) participation in the Social Dialogue, (5) involvement in the EESC, (6) engagement in transnational umbrella organisations and networks. An office in Brussels is also frequently cited as a channel of influence. An office in itself, however, does not guarantee involvement in decision-making processes and it can facilitate the pursuit of all the avenues listed above.

According to the channels of influence, there are four relevant forums for political decision-making for trade unions: (1) the European Commission or the appropriate Directorate-General, (2) the Council of Ministers or the appropriate national representation at the Council of Ministers or the relevant working group, (3) the EU Parliament or the responsible parliamentary committee and (4) the Social Dialogue. The fifth and sixth channels listed in the previous paragraph represent organisations (EESC or European umbrella organisations) that offer an alternative form of access to the relevant four forums of decision-making.

Next to integration into decision-making processes, the research project also encompasses the Europeanisation of trade unions from the post-socialist member states. This concerns not only the extent to which the EU level is being integrated into trade union activity and what significance interest representation on the EU level is accorded. It must also be examined if ideas, concepts or values from the EU level are being transferred to national and sub-national levels, i.e. if an exchange is taking place between Brussels and the new member states' trade unions.

Europeanisation will be defined here according to Radaelli: 'Europeanisation consists of processes of a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, "ways of doing things", and shared beliefs and norms which

4 For a conceptualisation of the required capacities, see Obradovic, Daniela / Pleines, Heiko (2007): The capacity of civil society organisations to participate in EU multi-level governance. An analytical framework, in: Obradovic, Daniela / Pleines, Heiko (eds): The capacity of Central and East European interest groups to participate in EU governance, Stuttgart: Ibidem, pp. 13–24.

5 Greenwood, Justin (2003): Interest representation in the European Union, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 160–161.

are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public policies.⁶

Such a Europeanisation is only possible when there is cross-linking between the levels. With respect to the trade unions, the first condition for Europeanisation is integration into the EU level in trade-union-related work and the perception of the EU as an important decision-making level.

If this condition is met, it can be investigated whether ideas, concepts or values from the EU level are indeed transferred to national (and subnational) levels, that is if a true exchange is occurring between Brussels and the new member states concerning the trade unions. This exchange should encompass the discussion of issues and behavioural and normative harmonisation. This issue is not only important for an understanding of national trade union activity, but it is also relevant for the long-term capacity of trade unions to effectively integrate themselves into decision-making processes on the EU level.

In the empirical analysis these two aspects, integration in decision-making and Europeanisation, will largely focus on the actors, that is on the trade unions, and to a lesser degree on individual policy fields. The primary objective is to evaluate the overall situation of the trade unions. Our policy research will therefore be interaction-oriented rather than problem-oriented.⁷ However, the focus on trade unions will automatically result in a concentration on the policy fields of labour market regulation and social policy.⁸

While our focus is on the trade unions, the analysis of their influence is also valuable for an analysis of the EU political system. An investigation of the experiences of trade union organisations from Central and East European member states offers a missing link between the research on post-socialist trade unions and on EU governance.

First, the Eastern expansion presents the first big test of how accessible the post-Maastricht system is for newcomers. This concerns the openness of European umbrella organisations as well as the capacity of EU institutions to organise comprehensive consultations in light of the rapid increase in the number of interest groups.

Second, the investigation of the participation of the relatively weak trade unions from the new member states in decision-making processes will help to clarify the relationship between formal representation and actual participation on the EU level.

6 Radaelli, Claudio M. (2004): Europeanisation: Solution or Problem?, in: *European Integration Online Papers* No. 16, pp. 3–4. An overview of the current state of research is given by Quaglia, Lucia et al. (2007): *Europeanization*, in: Cine, Michelle (ed.): *European Union politics*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, pp. 405–420; Axt, Hans-Jürgen / Milosoki, Antonio / Schwarz, Oliver (2007): *Europäisierung – ein weites Feld. Literaturbericht und Forschungsfragen*, in: *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, vol. 48, No. 1, pp. 136–149.

7 Scharpf, Fritz W. (1997): *Games real actors play. Actor-centered institutionalism in policy research*, Boulder, pp. 10–12.

8 A research project initiated by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation provides an overview of the trade unions' positions with respect to economic and social policy. An overview of the results is provided by Busemeyer, Marius. R. / Kellermann, Christian / Petring, Alexander / Stuchlik, Andrej (2007): *Overstretching solidarity? Trade unions' national perspectives on the European Economic and Social model*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Berlin. The complete project data are available online under: http://fesportal.fes.de/pls/portal30/docs/FOLDER/POLITIKANALYSE/PUBLIKATIONEN/IN_EUR_SOZIAL.HTM.

Third, the new post-Socialist member states pose interesting cases for an analysis of the influence of EU multilevel governance on the political role of trade unions. Because the accession negotiations were protracted and formal, the European Commission initiated a series of programmes for interest groups from the candidate countries in order to prepare them for collaborative work in the EU. As a result, they were able to build new coalitions on different EU levels.

Fourth, the recent integration into EU governance offers a chance to have a new look at forms and causes of Europeanisation.

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Analysis of the Questionnaires

Within the context of the project more than 40 trade union representatives, more than 10 representatives of employers' unions and more than 20 experts from politics and consultancy were interviewed. From each of the trade unions and employers' unions executive members were selected who were responsible for the relations of their organisation to the EU (heads of department and members of the board, respectively). In order to obtain reliable information concerning the position of the organisations, for each organisation at least two representatives were interviewed, thus ensuring that details on the position of the interviewee's organisation were not distorted by personal preferences of an outsider.

The questionnaire was designed by Heiko Pleines and then critically examined by the project partners, the members of the project advisory board and other experts. The final German version of the questionnaire was translated into the four other interview languages (English, Polish, Slovak and Czech); the translations were then reviewed and corrected by native speakers using back-translation.

The interviews were conducted as face-to-face interviews by the partner institution responsible for the country in question in the form of personal conversations. The completed questionnaires and the recorded guided interviews are being centrally archived at the Research Centre for East European Studies.

The questionnaire with a total of 43 questions is divided into 7 parts:

- I. importance of the EU in the interviewee's personal estimation
- II. introduction of the country to the EU (before the accession of the country to the EU)
- III. requirements of the EU Commission on lobbyists (accountability)
- IV. ways of exerting influence at the EU level
- V. potential of exerting influence and contentment
- VI. connections between EU and national level
- VII. information on the interviewee

In the following pages, the questionnaires with the answers of the trade union and employers' representatives from Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia as well as those of the experts are reproduced. The answers are listed in the order of topics of the questions.

If the questions differ in the way they are formulated, this is indicated by slashes (your trade union / your organisation / the trade unions from our country). If the questions are directed at employers' representatives or experts and relate to the trade unions, the answers are cited separately.

Importance of the EU

Q1. What is your personal assessment of the importance of the EU in comparison to national politics?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
significantly more important	11%	22%	25%
slightly more important	21%	56%	6%
equally important	54%	11%	44%
slightly less important	14%	11%	25%
significantly less important	0%	0%	0%

Q2. What general role of the EU do you think is desirable? The impact of the EU on national policy

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
should grow	61%	44%	38%
should stay the same	19%	44%	56%
should decrease	13%	11%	6%
no answer	6%	0%	0%

Q3. How important is interest representation at the EU level for your union / for your association in comparison to the national level?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations
significantly more important	7%	11%
slightly more important	18%	0%
equally important	57%	89%
slightly less important	7%	0%
significantly less important	4%	0%
no answer	7%	0%

Q3e. How important is interest representation at the EU level for trade unions from our country in comparison to the national level?

	Experts
significantly more important	0%
slightly more important	13%
equally important	56%
slightly less important	31%
significantly less important	0%
no answer	0%

Q4. How does the EU impact the work of your union / of your association / of trade unions?
The EU

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	Experts
has a positive effect	89%	70%	75%
has no effect	7%	0%	19%
has a negative effect	4%	20%	0%
don't know	0%	10%	6%

Q5+. Does your union take part in EU projects?

	Trade unions*
as submitter of the project	32%
as project partner	58%
no	6%
no answer	3%

* multiple answers for Poland, Czech Republic.

Preparations for EU Membership

Q6. Did the EU help your union / trade unions from our country prior to accession in 2004 to prepare for participation at the EU level?

	Trade unions	experts
yes	86%	100%
no*	14%	0%

* if no, continue with question Q9

Q7. How? (multiple answers possible)

	Trade unions	experts
financial support	15%	16%
training or seminars for union employees	25%	27%
organisation of international contacts and networks	24%	16%
supply of information	25%	27%
other	7%	11%
no answer	4%	4%

Q8. Was this EU support for your union / the unions generally

	Trade unions	experts
very helpful	25%	25%
sufficiently helpful	57%	38%
not very helpful	4%	13%
not helpful at all	0%	25%
no answer	14%	0%

Q9. Did you in 2004 have the impression that your union was / trade unions from our country were well prepared for its work at the EU level?

	Trade unions	experts
yes	50%	19%
somewhat	46%	38%
no	4%	31%
don't know	0%	13%

Q10. Has anything changed since then?

	Trade unions	experts
yes, for the better	75%	56%
yes, for the worse	21%	0%
no, not at all	4%	31%
don't know	0%	13%

Accountability**Q11. The European Commission compiled a list of requirements for non-governmental organisations wishing to advise the Commission. The main requirements are representativeness, accountability and transparency. Are you familiar with these requirements?**

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
very familiar	64%	78%	38%
somewhat familiar	21%	22%	31%
I have heard about them before	4%	0%	13%
This is the first time I have heard about them	11%	0%	19%

Q12. Do you think your union / your association fulfils the requirements for representativeness, accountability and transparency?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations
yes, completely	89%	100%
somewhat	11%	0%
no	0%	0%
don't know	0%	0%
no answer	0%	0%

Q12a. Do you think that trade unions from our country fulfil the requirements for representativeness, accountability and transparency?

	Employers' associations	experts
yes, completely	66%	41%
somewhat	22%	35%
no	11%	0%
don't know	0%	12%
no answer	0%	12%

Q13. Do you consider it fair that the European Commission imposes requirements on organisations that advise it?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations
yes, in any case	68%	89%
yes, under certain circumstances	29%	11%
no, under no circumstances	0%	0%
no answer	4%	0%

Q14. In your opinion, how should these requirements be interpreted?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
strictly	64%	67%	56%
less strictly	21%	33%	25%
only very loosely	4%	0%	0%
no answer	11%	0%	13%
don't know	0%	0%	6%

Q15. Do you think it is necessary to specify and expand these requirements, or is it sufficient to allow them to serve as a rough guideline?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
specify and expand	43%	67%	50%
rough guideline	50%	33%	31%
no answer	7%	0%	13%
don't know	0%	0%	3%

Channels of Influence

Q16. In which ways does your union / your association try to exert influence at the EU level? (multiple answers possible)

	Trade unions	Employers' associations
direct consultations with the European Commission	6%	12%
direct consultations with the European Parliament	10%	12%
consultations with national representatives in the Council of Ministers	13%	4%
via the EU Social Dialogue	20%	23%
via the European Economic and Social Committee	20%	23%
via membership in an European umbrella organisation	24%	15%
others	5%	12%
don't know	0%	0%

Q16a. According to your experience, in which ways do trade unions from our country try to exert influence at the EU level? (multiple answers possible)

	Employers' associations	experts
direct consultations with the European Commission	7%	4%
direct consultations with the European Parliament	10%	9%
consultations with national representatives in the Council of Ministers	7%	7%
via the EU Social Dialogue	20%	22%
via the European Economic and Social Committee	23%	28%
via membership in an European umbrella organisation	23%	26%

	Employers' associations	experts
other	10%	0%
don't know	0%	4%

Q18. Does your union / your association represent interests at the EU level mostly alone or in cooperation with other unions / other associations? (multiple answers possible)

	Trade unions	Employers' associations
mostly alone	3%	21%
in cooperation with other unions	30%	43%
via an umbrella organisation like the ETUC	67%	36%

Q18e. Do trade unions from our country represent their interests at the EU level mostly alone or in cooperation with other unions?

	experts*
mostly alone	5%
in cooperation with other unions	36%
via an umbrella organisation like the ETUC	45%
don't know	14%

* multiple answers for Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Q19. What the general assessment of your union / your association regarding collaboration with European umbrella organisations?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations
positive	79%	67%
mixed	14%	22%
negative	4%	0%
don't know	4%	11%

Q20. Does your union / your association cooperate with social partners from our country at the EU level?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations
on a regular basis	50%	44%
occasionally	29%	22%
barely ever	21%	22%
no answer	0%	11%

Q20e. Do trade unions from our country cooperate at the EU level with social partners from our country?

	experts
on a regular basis	31%
occasionally	38%
barely ever	19%
no answer	13%

Q21. Do you think direct representation via an office in Brussels is

	Trade unions	Employers' associations
important	68%	78%
helpful under certain circumstances	29%	22%
unnecessary	4%	0%
don't know	0%	0%

Q21e. Do you think in the case of trade unions from our country direct representation via an office in Brussels is

	experts
important	44%
helpful under certain circumstances	38%
unnecessary	13%
don't know	6%

Q25. Besides traditional forms of direct consultation, the European Commission has developed new modes of governance including – for instance – internet based consultations, the open method of coordination, voluntarily agreements, voluntarily self-commitment and codes of best practices. What is your organisation's position towards these new forms of collaboration?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations
we know about and use them	57%	67%
we know about them but do not use them	36%	22%
we do not know about them	4%	11%
don't know	4%	0%

Q25e. Besides traditional forms of direct consultation, the European Commission has developed new modes of governance including – for instance – internet based consultations, the open method of coordination, voluntarily agreements, voluntarily self-commitment and codes of best practices. In your opinion what is the position of trade unions from our country towards these new forms of collaboration?

	experts
we know about and use them	19%
we know about them but do not use them	50%
we do not know about them	13%
don't know	19%

Influence Potential and Satisfaction

Q26. How do you assess the overall influence of trade unions at the EU level compared to other interest groups?

	Trade unions	experts
relatively great	50%	56%
average	46%	38%
relatively small	4%	6%

Q27. Has that changed in the last few years?

	Trade unions	experts
yes, the unions' influence has increased	25%	19%
yes, the unions' influence has decreased	32%	44%
no, the unions' influence has stayed the same	36%	31%
don't know	4%	6%
no answer	4%	0%

Q26a. How do you assess the overall influence of employers' associations at the EU level compared to trade unions?

	Employers' associations
greater	30%
equal	50%
smaller	10%
don't know	10%

Q27a. Has that changed in the last few years?

	Employers' associations
yes, the employers' influence has increased	33%
yes, the employers' influence has decreased	22%
no, the employers' influence has stayed the same	33%
no answer	11%

Q28. How do you assess the role of employers' associations / trade unions at the EU level? The employers' associations / trade unions are

	Trade unions*	Employers' associations**
constructive partners	36%	36%
an opponent that blocks actions	33%	50%
one competitor among many	15%	7%
don't know	12%	0%
no answer	3%	7%

* multiple answers for Poland

** multiple answers for Poland, Slovakia

Q28e. How do you assess the relationship between trade unions and employers' associations at the EU level? For the trade unions the employers' associations are

	experts*
constructive partners	41%
an opponent that blocks actions	29%
one competitor among many	29%

* multiple answers for Poland, Slovakia

Q29. How do you assess the influence of your union / trade unions from our country at the EU level in comparison to the national level?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
greater	29%	11%	13%
the same	25%	67%	13%
smaller	39%	0%	75%
don't know	7%	22%	0%

Q30. Do you think that your union / trade unions from our country provide an important contribution to the unions' interest representation at the EU level?

	Trade unions	experts
yes	71%	63%
no	29%	25%
don't know	0%	13%

Q30a. How do you evaluate the role of trade unions from our country at the EU level?

	Employers' associations
They strengthen the influence of trade unions at the EU level.	33%
They make no difference.	56%
They make it more difficult for trade unions to present a common position.	11%

Q31. Are you satisfied with the role your union plays at the EU level?

	Trade unions
yes	61%
no	39%

Q32. Are you satisfied with the role your union plays at the national level?

	Trade unions
yes	75%
no	25%

Connections between the EU and the National Level

Q33. Do the activities of your union / your association / trade unions from our country at the EU level influence its / their work at the national level?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
often	54%	56%	19%
occasionally	46%	44%	75%
never	0%	0%	6%

Q34. Do the EU requirements influence the work of your union/ your association / of trade unions from our country at the national level?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
Often	46%	78%	56%
occasionally	50%	22%	38%
never	4%	0%	6%

Q35. Does your union / your association use the EU as an argument to justify or support its position or activities?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations
Often	61%	56%
occasionally	39%	44%
never	0%	0%

Q35e. Do trade unions from our country use the EU as an argument to justify or support their position or activities?

	experts
Often	63%
occasionally	31%
never	6%

Personal Information

Q38. How do you assess your personal influence within your union / your association / your organisation?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
I am one of the central decision makers	64%	67%	38%
I can create constructive majorities	29%	22%	31%
I am often isolated	0%	0%	0%
Central decisions are made without me	0%	0%	0%
I am a consultant	7%	11%	6%
don't know	0%	0%	6%
no answer	0%	0%	6%

Q39. Do you belong to a political party?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
yes	32%	0%	19%
no	68%	100%	81%

Q40. How would you describe your political orientation?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
communist/socialist	7%	0%	0%
social democrat	86%	11%	38%
conservative/Christian democrat	0%	11%	13%
nationalist	0%	0%	0%
liberal	4%	33%	19%
green/ecological	0%	0%	13%
other	4%	44%	13%
no answer	0%	0%	6%

Q42. What is your educational level?

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
college/university degree (BA, MA, Diploma)	75%	100%	94%
apprenticeship (after secondary school degree)	21%	0%	6%
secondary school degree	4%	0%	0%
Primary school degree	0%	0%	0%

Q43. What foreign languages do you speak fluently? (multiple answers possible)

	Trade unions	Employers' associations	experts
German	10%	14%	3%
English	22%	29%	44%
French	6%	14%	9%
Greek	0%	4%	0%
Italian	0%	0%	3%
Norwegian	2%	0%	0%
Russian	29%	21%	19%
Swedish	10%	0%	0%
Spanish	0%	4%	0%
Czech	14%	11%	16%
Hungarian	2%	4%	6%
no language	6%	0%	0%

Excerpts from the Guided Interviews

Within the context of the project more than 40 trade union representatives, more than 10 representatives of employers' unions and more than 20 experts from politics and consultancy were interviewed. From each of the trade unions and employers' unions executive members were selected who were responsible for the relations of their organisation to the EU (heads of department and members of the board, respectively). In order to obtain reliable information concerning the position of the organisations, for each organisation at least two representatives were interviewed, thus ensuring that details on the position of the interviewee's organisation were not distorted by personal preferences of an outsider. The list of respondents is given at the end of this paper.

The interviews were conducted by the partner institution responsible for the country in question in the form of personal conversations. The completed questionnaires and the recorded guided interviews are being centrally archived at the Research Centre for East European Studies.

In what follows, the answers to some of the key questions from the guided interviews are reproduced in excerpts. As many respondents insisted on anonymity, the interviewees are designated by abbreviations that identify country (CZ: Czech Republic, PL: Poland, SK: Slovakia) and group (Gn: trade unionists of the new member states, An: employers of the new member states, Ex: experts). Only responses of trade union representatives from Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are presented in the following pages. Within the main questions the answers are arranged to the greatest possible extent according to topic.

How do you Assess the Role of the EU for the Work of your Trade Union? Please Give Examples.

[Summary: the role of the EU for trade union work is on the whole assessed positively. This often applies to the implementation of directives and standards relating to labour law. Besides this, networking at the European level plays an important role for the trade unions. Moreover, via the integration in European trade union associations' influence on both EU policies politics and national politics can be increased.]

PL-Gn01:

I have to define the concept 'European Union'. For me as a trade union official, this concept refers to our presence in our umbrella organisation, which represents us vis-à-vis various European institutions. Among these are the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council.

Through our cooperation in the European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC], we exert a decisive influence on the drafting of many directives, for example, on the drafting of the directive on services in the European Single Market. Solidarność was one of the organisations that submitted a statement on the directive that was being drafted. When it became necessary, we also demonstrated together with 60,000 other trade unionists.

It is interesting that with Józef Niemiec a representative of Solidarność has been elected for a second term at the ETUC congress in Seville [in 2007]. The former chairman of Solidarność was also responsible for the drafting of the statement of the ETUC on the so-called Bolkestein directive on services in the European Single Market.

Additionally, membership in the EU makes it possible to have 'one's own people' in important committees and institutions.

Moreover, accession to the EU also meant the implementation of certain directives and standards in Poland. This in turn had a positive influence on the trade union and labour world in the broadest sense. One example: Directive No. 14 of 2002 on the rights of employees to information and consultation¹, on the basis of which employees' councils were appointed in firms in which trade unions are not represented.

PL-Gn07:

Membership in the EU offers above all two different advantages: contacts and an enlarged scope of action for the trade unions. For example, talks on the Green Paper of the Commission and the restrictions of employee rights contained in this Paper were made possible via contacts to the Deputy Chairman of the European Parliament.

Membership in the EU has also enlarged the scope of action for trade unions, the rights of Polish employees can now also be protected at the European level: 'there is somebody else to whom one can tell one's troubles'. Moreover, the EU offers support for the resolving of conflicts at the national level.

Apart from these issues, membership in the European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF) also means support for national protests.

[The EU plays a significant role for the work of trade unions by supporting trade union positions in negotiations with the state or with employers via EU directives and standards. Therefore, the implementation of regulations which are beneficial to employees does not have to be pushed through solely by the trade unions; they are supported by European law and by standards laid down at the European level.]

PL-Gn04:

It is a positive factor that membership in the EU prevents the state from acting without consulting both sides of industry. Moreover, membership in the EU offers an additional arena for the protection of Polish employee rights, e.g., via the Charter of Fundamental Rights. I would like to mention two examples of this:

When the Polish government wanted to change the European Working Time Directive without consulting us, we found out about this project amongst others through our membership in ETUC. This enabled us to comment on this. Ultimately, this prevented the government acting without consulting society.

A further example was the declaration of the prime minister concerning provisos and restrictions in the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

We act both at the national and at the European level, as we are of the opinion that the Poles expressed their support of an EU based on the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the referendum. In the same moment that Poland became a member of the EU, the Charter was recognised as the basis for the future organisation of Europe.

1 Framework Directive for informing and consulting employees (Directive 2002/14/EC).

Thus, membership in ETUC is an additional source for information. We can inform ourselves not only on European, but also on national matters.

PL-Gn02:

A positive, but so far still too small, influence of the EU can be felt due to the fact that some regulations relating to labour law were included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The implementation of directives and standards relating to labour law in Poland also put an end to the discussions on certain topics at the national level. By their implementation, [these directives and standards] have become law and thus binding. However, many areas are still regulated at the national level; e.g., working time is still a bone of contention between trade unions and employers. Working time should be included in the catalogue of fundamental rights.

Increasing standardisation of law is a positive influence of the EU.

PL-Gn05:

The EU helps with the implementation of regulations and standards relating to labour law in Poland. Moreover, membership in the EU has a positive effect on the drafting and introduction of a social model and a culture of negotiation in Poland.

[The increased networking of the trade unions throughout Europe does not only lead to an exchange of information; rather, trade unions can represent and assert their positions on a major scale at the European level.]

PL-Gn06:

EU membership promotes contacts to other national trade union organisations, e.g. in Germany and Sweden. Because of this, EU membership is also a source of new knowledge and an aid for the mutual exchange of information. Examples of this are activities at the European level such as the participation in protests in Strasbourg and Brussels against the Bolkestein directive.

CZ-Gn08:

A current example is the following: together, we participate in negotiations at the European level; e.g., during activities that are supposed to demonstrate our resistance to certain legislative proposals, such as the Bolkestein directive on services in the European single market. Therefore I can say: in some of these legislative processes we attempted to exert influence via the European level.

PL-Gn08:

In the course of EU membership there will also be an integration of the trade unions at the European level. The exchange of experiences and opinions are being intensified, new contacts are being intensified and new views of some social problems, because a comparison to other countries is made easier. There are good personal contacts to colleagues from Germany, Italy, Spain and France. These contacts have a positive effect on the development of the trade union federation.

The introduction of European Works Councils [EWC] and the creation of works councils in companies in which no trade union is represented are positive effects.

PL-Gn10:

The cooperation with CESI (Confédération Européenne des Syndicats Indépendants) and with DBB (Deutscher Beamtenbund) can be assessed as very positive. One of the deputy chairpersons of CESI is from Forum (Forum Związków Zawodowych, FZZ); thus, membership in the EU permits the placing of one's own representatives in committees and institutions at the EU level. Cooperation at the European level leads to the acquisition of new knowledge and experience.

CZ-Gn08:

We have to go back in history. We became members of ETUC even before accession to the EU. The EU already helped us before membership during the accession process. Above all, this concerns information, but also the integration into various projects. Thus, we had the occasion to participate in various activities even then. This was definitely positive.

[Apart from these topics, which were mentioned most of all, the EU also plays a role for trade union work in other areas; for example, the EU played a positive role for the creation of the employees' social charter, for the development of the Social Dialogue and of collective negotiations, for pensions and for miners' working conditions (CZ-Gn01). The EU moreover exerts influence via the Directives on Working Time² and Services³ (CZ-Gn03, CZ-Gn05), as well as in the area of industrial policy (CZ-Gn05). Trade unions aim at creating the same conditions for everybody as far as working time and the Directive on Services are concerned (CZ-Gn03); on the other hand, they do not aim for, and take a negative view of, the transition to more flexible employment relationships as supported by EU Commissar Vladimír Špidla from the Czech Republic (CZ-Gn01).

The EU plays a role for trade union work in the area of energy policy (CZ-Gn02). Trade unions view improving the quality of trade union work and of trade union officials as well as the development of European Works Councils from a pan-European point of view (CZ-Gn06). They also single out improved exchange of information for praise (CZ-Gn10).]

CZ-Gn07:

The Social Dialogue and the values contained in the so-called European Social Model, which are valid throughout Europe, can be viewed positively. The Social Dialogue is part of the Social Model, which, while differing from country to country, does have common characteristics. The Social Dialogue is codified in EU documents, its committees meet regularly, and the agreements of the two sides of industry are respected. Thus, by structuring civil society, the Social Dialogue and the European Social Model also lead to a strengthening of democracy.

2 Council Directive 93/104/EC of 23 November 1993, amended by Directive 2000/34/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 June 2000.

3 Directive on services in the internal market, Directive 2006/123/EC, commonly referred to as the Bolkestein directive.

[During the interviews, the Slovak trade union representatives often underlined the positive influence of the European level, such as the directives of the EU Commission or the 'Green Paper on Labour Law', on trade union work at the national level.]

SK-Gn01:

When the labour law was amended, we as trade unions often quoted the regulations of the European Commission during the negotiations. Moreover, EU regulations now are observed to a greater extent.

[The Green Paper 'Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21st century' of the EU Commission also played an important role for other respondents (SK-Gn03, SK-Gn05, SK-Gn07) when the labour law was amended.]

In addition, SK-Gn02 underscores the adoption of European norms at the national level, which SK-Gn06 specifies and applies in particular to social matters; e.g., certain standards for social protection, to which Slovakia would not conform without accession to the EU, are associated with the EU.

SK-Gn04 sees effects of the EU on trade union work for the following issues: the problem of multinational corporations, questions of national legislation, the question of workers of temporary employment agencies (in this case e.g. the Austrian model for the protection of agency employees) and the cooperation and help of trade unions in the metal-processing sector; e.g., trade union members who are not working in their home country are entitled to free legal assistance rendered by the 'cooperating trade union' in the host country. SK-Gn04 singled this out for especial praise.]

Does your Trade Union Use the EU as an Argument for the Justification or Support of its Positions or Activities at the National Level?

[Summary: at the national level, the EU is used less to justify and more to support trade union positions. Trade unions in particular refer to standards of the EU in labour law conflicts with employers or the state.]

PL-Gn03:

The directive relating to working time. In this area, there are problems relating to the Polish health system, in which standby duty is not counted as working hours. However, by its verdicts the European Court has established standards according to which standby duty should be counted as working hours. We are trying to solve this problem.

PL-Gn02:

If we discuss the labour market, working time or qualifications, we often refer to the standards of the EU.

CZ-Gn04:

We used the EU and European standards as argument and support in the area of labour law relations.

[The EU seems to play an especially important role as support for trade unions' arguments for disputes on negotiated wages and salaries and for questions of payment.]

PL-Gn05:

When we consider it appropriate, we refer to the European Union, for example, when we discuss fixed-term employment contracts. In this case, we used the directive in order to convince the government to limit the number of fixed-term contracts. This was during the term of office of the last government. And yes, indeed, the law that was passed in Poland limited this number [i.e., of fixed-term employment contracts]. Thus, according to the law, since 1 May 2004 no more than a certain number of fixed-term contracts can be carried out.

However, whether we referred to this directive or not: European legislation is binding. It could well be that some else would have referred to [this directive]. In spite of this: yes, we used this argument in our favour.

PL-Gn04:

Recently, we sent a letter to the president concerning the ratification of the article on just pay for work. Generally, we also refer to the Charter of Fundamental Rights and to many directives which above all deal with social standards and remuneration [for work].

We also refer to European average values and to European standards concerning minimum wages for various areas of life, e.g. in the health system. It was said earlier that the minimum wage should be 60% of the average income. We are now campaigning for increased wages and in particular as far as the minimum wage is concerned we refer to the principles of the EU.

PL-Gn06:

Yes, for example in respect to the level of remunerations for work in the European Union and in Poland and also in respect to the pensions system. [...] I also know other examples when 'provisional pensions' or other solutions were accepted both by governments and also by trade unions and became certain standards. Why then don't we use European models as examples?

[A significant number of Slovak trade union representatives (SK-Gn01, SK-Gn04, SK-Gn05, SK-Gn06, SK-Gn07, SK-Gn08) cited the amendment of the labour law as a concrete example. In this case, the EU seems to have been an important support for the trade unionists' arguments.]

SK-Gn02:

The amendment of the labour law. Quoting European regulations directives was a strong argument.

[In Poland, trade unions referred to the liquidation of, and the subsidies meted out to, the German mining industry in order to assert their claims to a restructuring of the Polish mining industry that was more socially acceptable.]

PL-Gn09:

Sometimes we refer to statements of the EU or use them as references. For example, in respect to restructuring programmes and subsidies in the German mining industry. Several times we raised the issue how the German government deals with this problem, albeit without success. All successive prime ministers declared that we are not the Federal Republic and cannot afford such things. Supposedly, we are also a significantly smaller net payer in the EU and also receive significantly less. And that was it.

PL-Gn10:

Yes, we use the EU. However, at the national level there is more or less no one left who needs convincing; at any rate, not the partners with whom we are dealing, that is, the representatives of the employers' and employees' organisations (OPZZ, Solidarność). Within these organisations, no one has to be convinced that such argumentations are right.

In respect to employees' affairs in which we tried to act it was always the best realisation that the given situation has already occurred in the European Union. For example, during the restructuring of the mining industry. In this case, we received a helpful consultation how the mining industry could be saved. Our reformers wanted to liquidate the mining industry very quickly, whereas the European Coal and Steel Community told us: stay calm and don't permit this to come about. We have liquidated mining for decades; do not permit this to happen in your country within the space of four or five years. This is not possible.

[Besides regulations pertaining to labour law, conflicts pertaining to negotiated rates, the amendment of the Slovak labour law and the restructuring in the Polish mining industry, various special cases were quoted, in which the trade union used the EU to support its arguments.]

CZ-Gn01:

We used the EU as support for our arguments for the Social Dialogue, and when discussing pensions, wages and work conditions.

CZ-Gn02:

In respect to the pension reform, we referred to a difference between Germany and the Czech Republic: in Germany, miners work 25% less shifts during their working life than miners in the Czech Republic.

CZ-Gn04:

In respect to overtime in transportation, in cinemas, theatres, etc.

CZ-Gn05:

Comparisons were made at the European level in the areas of working time, restructuring of the steel industry and taxation of firms.

CZ-Gn07:

In our case, the problem was telecommuting, which is only just beginning in the Czech Republic; we know, however, that e.g. in the Netherlands 25% of employees work according to this

model. Therefore, we are trying to gain experience over there; amongst other things, in order to see what it does to society.

CZ-Gn08:

We refer to the EU in all questions pertaining to the social acquis, for example, also in the case of the reform of the Lisbon strategy, of the employment strategy or of social integration – and of course, there is the question of equal opportunities for men and women, which is very important for me, since I spend a lot of time on this issue.

CZ-Gn09:

Interoperability of employees in railway traffic.

CZ-Gn10:

Questions of wages, collective negotiations and occupational safety.

SK-Gn03:

Recently, we again used the European example in the question of collective bargaining above the company level, when we ascertained in the course of a survey that in the majority of EU countries this is in force.

PL-Gn01:

We used arguments of ECTU in order to underline the importance of finding a solution for the implementation of the directive on information and consultation rights. In the end, it became a law on European Works' Councils. In this case it was important that trade unions had the last word in the formulation of the law. I mean the Directive No. 14 of the year 2002.

[Apart from the support of trade union positions at the national level by using European standards during conflicts with governments or employees, the shunting off of responsibility to Brussels is also viewed critically.]

PL-Gn03:

'The EU wants it thus!' is no argument. If certain regulations which are implemented in Poland go in the wrong direction and deviate from European standards, we point this out. But then we don't do it the way it was done during the negotiations: we now must carry out harsh reforms because the EU demands it. In this moment, approval of the EU went down among certain groups in society. We have to do it this way, so that there are no legal contradictions later on.

PL-Gn07:

Yes, since by signing the declaration to accede to the European Metalworkers Federation (EMF) we have so to speak committed ourselves to supporting the activities of the federation to support other trade unions, in other countries as well. This is a part of the duties established in the statutes. Therefore we send support whenever there is a strike anywhere. Of course, this doesn't always suit our purposes, as when production is transferred from France to Poland we

should really be glad and not block such transfers. Sometimes you need philosophy and diplomacy in order to integrate your interests.

PL-Gn08:

In my opinion, it can be good if I cite the European Union or EU directives in discussions as arguments without noticing it. This is also because of the fact that there is a lot that is a matter of course for me. Therefore, I also act accordingly. I don't even notice it, I just do or say it. However, if during meetings there is the possibility of using the phrase 'Because the EU wants it thus!' – no, on the whole I don't use it.

[The trade union representatives seem to use the EU to support their arguments especially in order to assert trade union positions in conflicts with governments or employers. For the most part, the issue is the implementation of European standards which are supposed to improve the condition of the employees. At least according to the respondents, effects that are negative for the trade unions are not simply foisted off on Brussels without further reflection.]

Translation from German: Matthias Neumann

List of Respondents (Abbreviation of Organisation and Number of Interviewees)

	Poland	Slovakia	Czech Republic	Brussels	Germany
National trade unions	2 Solidarnosc 2 OPZZ 2 FZZ 2 FZZ Metalowcy 2 ZZG	5 KOZ SR 2 OZ KOVO 2 OZ PBGN	4 CMKOS 2 ASO 1 KUK 1 KOVO 2 OS PHGN	1 DGB 1 UPA 1 UGT 1 GMB	2 DGB 2 IG Metall 2 IG BCE
European umbrella associations of trade unions	-	-	-	1 ETUC 1 EMF (Metall) 1 EFFAT	-
National employers' associations	1 KPP 1 PKPP Lewiatan 1 BCC	2 RUZ 1 AZZZ	1 SP CR 1 Economic Chamber 1 SCMVD		-
European umbrella associations of employers	-	-	-	2 CEEP	-
Political administrations	2 Ministry of Labour	1 Ministry of Labour 1 MEP	1 MEP	2 EU Commission (DG Employment)	-
experts	2 academics 1 NGO	2 academics	2 academics 2 NGO	1 NGO 2 analyst	-

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